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Carter Gives New Push To PR Effort on SALT Pact

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DISNEY WORLD, Fla. — In anticipation of an agreement with the Soviet Union to limit strategic arms, the Carter administration is stepping up its efforts to demonstrate it is capable of looking after U.S. interests.

Apart from negotiating the substance of the limitations, the administration has been conducting a campaign of public education and persuasion in support of the treaty it hopes to negotiate.

The most visible elements of that campaign have been meetings with community leaders organized around the country by the State Department.

Yesterday, President Carter gave the public relations effort a push by talking about the chief means the United States has to keep track of what the Soviet Union is doing: spy satellites.

NOT THAT THE president had much to say. "Photo reconnaissance satellites have become an important stabilizing factor in world affairs in the monitoring of arms control agreements. They make an immense contribution to the security of all nations. We shall continue to develop them," he said.

This was news to no one. The fact that spy satellites are used to keep track of opposing missile silos, for instance, has long been the most open of secrets.

Carter's mention of the satellites came early in a two-stop Florida trip that first brought him to Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center before he arrived here to address a session of the International Chamber of Commerce.

The satellite reference was made in a speech at the cape commemorating the 20th anniversary of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Presidential press secretary Jody Powell made sure none of the reporters traveling with Carter missed the reference by pointing out that it was the first time a president had publicly acknowledged the spies in the sky.

PREVIOUSLY the satellites had been referred to in the euphemistic jargon of arms control as "national technical means" of verifying what the other side was doing.

"It is important for people to know that we are in a position to verify without relying on the good intentions of the (other) party," Powell said.

Without offering any specifics, Powell went on to say that "to say that it (the satellites' picture-taking ability) is good is an understatement."

In the speech at the space center, Carter seemed to have encouragement for both critics and advocates of space spending. Space activities "will be measured against all the needs of our country," he said, but he added, "we will not give up the leadership of the United States in space."

While there Carter presented the congressional space medal of honor to former astronauts Neil Armstrong, Frank Borman, Charles Conrad Jr., Sen. John H. Glenn Jr., D-Ohio, Alan B. Shepard Jr. and to the widow of Virgil I. Grissom, the second American in space (in a 1961 suborbital shot), who later lost his life during preparation for the first Apollo flight.

THE SPACE CENTER is now conducting the \$5.2 billion space shuttle program. Carter viewed a shuttle launch pad and met shuttle pilots while at the center.

"The first great era of the space age is over. The second is about to begin," Carter said in his speech. "It will come into its own with the new space shuttle, the heart of our new space transportation system...."